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INFO RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS IMMEDIATE

RUEAHND/COMJTF-B SOTO CANO HO IMMEDIATE

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE

RUMIAAA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL IMMEDIATE

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000786

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [HO](#)

SUBJECT: TFH01: INTER-AMERICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

VISIT TO HONDURAS - FIRST TWO DAYS

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 772

[1](#)B. TEGUCIGALPA 687

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Simon Henshaw, reasons 1.4 (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. A delegation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) arrived in Tegucigalpa August 16 to evaluate the human rights situation in the country. During the first two days the delegation met with two separate groups of Congressmen, the National Police, the Supreme Court, the Honduran military, members of President Zelaya's cabinet, and various non-governmental organizations.

The visit will conclude August 21 with a press release and news conference. US Commissioner Paolo Carozza told Charge he expected their report to be balanced, but expressed concern that the group's Venezuelan head may politicize her public remarks on the group's visit. End Summary.

[1](#)2. The delegation is comprised of IACHR president Luz Patricia Mejia (Venezuela), Vice President Victor Abramovich (Argentina), Felipe Gonzalez (Chile), Paolo Carozza (United States), and Executive Secretary Santiago Canton (Argentina). Charge met with Carozza August 18; Carozza characterized the delegation's activities as productive. He said the most serious allegations that appear credible reported to the commission are three to five possible cases of disappearances. Carozza commented that in meetings with various groups, a common complaint is the use of arbitrary detention without formal processing (leaving no record of the detention) and that regime elements defend the practice because they do not hold protestors longer than the period allowed by law. Carozza disputed regime claims that a large number of foreigners were involved in demonstrations, saying that the numbers he had seen suggested that foreigners were a small percentage of the detained and agreeing with Charge's observation that the regime had not presented any evidence to show that any of the detained foreigners were provocateurs.

[1](#)3. (C) Carozza expressed confidence in the delegation's ability to produce a balanced report. However, he stated concern over the unpredictability of delegation president Mejia, especially on how she might portray the delegation's findings during the group's departure press conference on August 21 or 22. Carozza described her as being "highly invested in representing her country," which overshadowed her objectivity. As an example, he explained that in Washington the delegation had agreed to wait until they were on the ground to make a decision about whether to meet directly with

regime head Roberto Micheletti. However, upon arrival at Toncontin Airport, Mejia made statements to the press that the delegation would not meet with Micheletti as he was not the legitimate leader of the country.

¶4. (C) Carozza commented that for the most part the group has felt welcome, but there remained distrust among Hondurans because of the delegation's institutional ties to the Organization of American States (OAS). For example, the delegation reportedly experienced problems contracting helicopter transportation in Honduras from one company because the owner refused to deal with an organization tied to the OAS.

¶5. (U) The delegation heard testimony from pro-Zelaya independent presidential candidate Carlos H. Reyes August 17 about his arbitrary detention by the Honduran military (Reftel B). The group also heard from pro-Zelaya Congressional Deputy Marvin Ponce (UD-Francisco Morazan) about his assault by police during an August 12 demonstration (Reftel B). Representatives of pro-regime daily newspaper "El Herald" presented a report on the damage to their building by Molotov cocktail bombs (Reftel A) and their fear of threats to a free press posed by pro-Zelaya radicals.

¶6. (C) Additionally, the IACHR delegation met with various representatives of President Zelaya's cabinet, including Minister of Labor Mayra Mejia August 17. A Liberal Party Congressional Deputy who opposed the coup, Elvia Argentina Valle Villalta, was present at the meeting and told PolOff that the meeting was very short, complaining that she was not given the opportunity to explain violations of her own human

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rights. As examples of these violations, she cited that on various occasions during debate in Congress, congressional leaders have refused to allow her and other Deputies who oppose the removal of President Zelaya to speak. Valle also claimed that police noted the license plate numbers of those who entered the meeting with the IACHR delegation. She also reported that other members of Congress that oppose the regime have told her they are no longer receiving their congressional salary.

¶7. (C) The IACHR delegation met with Congress Vice President Ramon Velasquez Nasar August 18. Velasquez told EmbOff that his impression was that the IACHR delegation was "not listening and was bringing their own agenda." He said the questions they presented to Congressional leaders demonstrated misinformation, for example, asking about alleged torture chambers in the basement of Congress. (Velasquez said he answered the question by stating the Congress building has no basement.) On August 19, President of Congress Jose Angel Saavedra acknowledged being asked by the delegation about rumors that members of Congress were being barred from attendance. Saavedra denied these accusations and cited attendance control sheets as proof this charge was untrue.

¶8. (U) In addition to meetings with Congressional leaders during their first two days in Honduras, the IACHR delegation met with the de facto regime's Minister of Defense, commanders of the Armed Forces, the acting Minister of Security, and members of the National Police. Beginning August 19 and for the remainder of the week, the delegation will continue to meet various human rights and social organizations and plans to also make daily trips to locations outside Tegucigalpa, including Tocoa and San Pedro Sula to hear testimony on human rights violations. National Police contacts told EmbOff that in contrast to the perception of Congressional leaders, they found the meeting with the IACHR delegation to be positive and that they did not detect an ideological bias during the meeting, finding the delegation to be objective and very professional. (Carozza was equally complementary about the police, telling Charge that they had presented straightforward information in a non-ideological

manner.)

19. (C) Comment: The delegation seems set to give a fair and balanced report on the human rights situation here, mirroring some of the same concerns that we have reported. Given the defensiveness of the regime to the IACHR delegation,s actions so far, it is likely to react negatively to any preliminary remarks they make to the press on departure. Politicized comments by the delegation's head, who will lead the press conference, may further provoke the regime. It is possible that the regime will attempt to tie any criticism in with the expected visit of the OAS foreign ministers delegation, which is tentatively scheduled to start a few days after the INACHR delegation,s departure. Post will continue to follow the delegation's visit and will meet with the delegation again on Friday August 21 with members of the G-16 group of donor missions. End Comment.  
HENSHAW